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ABSTRACT

Forty-five magnet schools in fifteen urban school districts were studied to find if magnet schools increase community participation in public education, what factors lead to increased community participation, and if there is a relationship between community participation and magnet school effectiveness. Major findings were the following: (1) Almost half the magnets had higher parent participation than other schools in their districts and, in general, the magnets had considerable success in stimulating participation by the private sector and nonprofit organizations. Sixty percent of the magnet schools had high or above average participation from two of the three sectors. (2) Three factors were strongly related to higher community participation (district policy consensus, community role in planning, and school implementation leadership), one factor was moderately related (magnet theme), and two factors were not related (type of magnet and neighborhood composition). (3) Districts with a high degree of overall community participation (parents, private sector, and nonprofit sector) had higher ratings on educational quality. The most basic finding was that a high level of parent and community participation is not an automatic byproduct of a magnet school program but is the result of a planned and sustained outreach effort for community involvement. (CMG)

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ANALYZING EFFECTS OF MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS*

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Rolf K. Blank

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
ANALYZING EFFECTS OF MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Community participation has been a major issue in urban education for the last two decades. The American public school tradition of locally elected boards and local decision-making gives strong legitimacy to calls for increased participation of citizens and parents in their schools. But demands for "community control," on movements in big-city school districts, beginning in the late 1960's, and school desegregation, ongoing since the 1950's, have been major factors in raising two issues: 1) the extent of participation across the total community, and 2) the impact of local citizen and parent participation on the education process.

Currently, two different and opposing views appear to predominate in the analysis of community participation. One view is that the role and influence of parent interest groups, local organizations and state and national programs in public school systems have produced a widely diverse and overly heterogeneous curriculum in most urban schools, particularly at the secondary level. Cusick outlines this position in a paper for the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) concluding that the breadth of choice of subject areas and courses in high schools has resulted in a decrease in emphasis on basic academic preparation, and the well-publicized decline in college entrance scores.

A second view is that broad parent and community participation is essential for maintaining a democratic method of making decisions in education systems as well as increasing the effectiveness of urban education. This democracy in education approach is advocated by Davies

(1978) and Gittel (1979), who in their research have found positive effects of citizen participation in education through community organizations that represent the interests of a broad spectrum of socio-economic and racial and ethnic groups, particularly groups generally not in positions of power and influence. The research of Brookover (1965) and Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) has demonstrated positive educational effects of parent involvement. From these study results, the problem in urban education is how to increase the representation of parents and community members in education so that greater parent interest will be invested in schools and the effectiveness of curricula and instruction for all students will be increased.

These two perspectives on the role and effects of community participation in urban education attribute the declining quality of education in our public schools to very different factors: a) the problem of overly diverse, and "thin" academic preparation, due to the diminishing effects on quality from the varied influence of a broad range of interest groups, vs. b) the problem of a low degree of involvement in urban schools by most parents and communities, and especially poor, working class, and minority families whose children are more likely to have academic and behavioral problems in school.

The recent group of national studies and reports on public education quality that advocate reforms, particularly in secondary education, have given some support to both perspectives on community participation. Community support and involvement is advocated, but the extent to which the community should participate in education decisions is generally not clarified. In its summary report recommending approaches to

improvements in education quality, the National Commission on Excellence in Education emphasized the need for more academic requirements and renewed stress on basic education. But, they also strongly recommended greater parent and community support for, and involvement in, their schools as well as greater attention to education by the society as a whole.

The panel of experts headed by Adler developed the Paeida Proposal (1983) which strongly advocates less diversity in the school curriculum and a standard curriculum, which would mean that education could be less influenced by community, state and national interest groups. However, several recent studies of effective urban high schools (Chase, 1980; Weisberg, 1981) find that school quality improvements are typically made through effective school-community linkages. The Excellence Commission also stresses the importance of broadened school-community linkages particularly with the private sector, higher education, local government and community non-profit organizations. The Commission's recommendations appear to support the view that broad involvement of the community has positive benefits even though an "open boundary" between school and community have been attributed with producing an overly diverse school curriculum.

MAGNET SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

This paper presents the results of research on the role of community participation in urban magnet schools. The magnet school is a model for urban education innovation that appears to have a capacity for attracting greater parent and community participation in schools.

A "magnet school" is a whole school or a program within a school that has a curriculum based on a special theme of a subject area or teaching method. The model offers the potential for curriculum innovation and improving education quality as well as providing an alternate method of desegregation through voluntarily enrolling students based on their interest in the magnet theme. The use of magnet schools has developed and expanded in American urban systems mainly over the last decade, growing from only a handful of districts to over 1100 schools in 140 districts (Blank, Dentler, et al, 1983).

One of the basic assumptions in the development of magnet schools by local districts is that parent and community participation will be increased. The combination of a unique education program and voluntary choice of the school by student and parents have been viewed as strong contributing factors to high community participation in a magnet school. To try to ensure that magnet schools are responsive to broad community interests and needs, the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) magnet grants program formalized participation by requiring that a local program advisory committee be formed and active (U.S. Department of Education ESAA Regulations, 1980). In her writing on magnet schools, Gittell (1979) maintains that a viable magnet school requires effective involvement of parents in planning and development.

Existing research and evaluation studies of local magnet school programs produce mixed findings on the degree to which magnet programs advance community participation. Levine and Eubanks (1980) found that magnet schools almost always gain higher participation of parents than other schools because of their tendency to attract parents with a higher disposition towards participation in their children's education. However, another study of magnet schools has found that developing successful parent and community involvement from a broad spectrum of the community is not easily done (Willie and Greenblatt, 1981). In some districts, the degree of success of the magnet program has been attributed to the district and school's ability to successfully gain parent interest, support and involvement (Comerford, 1981; Brooks and Langford, 1979). Thus, both the degree of parent participation in magnet schools and the importance of parent participation in a magnet program's success are research questions yet to be answered.

Descriptions of several successful magnet school programs in big-city districts place high importance on the involvement and contribution of local corporations, universities, and/or cultural organizations.

A community advisory committee comprised of business and professional experts in various fields related to magnet school themes has often been cited as a key to the Dallas program's success (Levine and Campbell, 1977; Maples and Scott, 1980). Community arts and cultural organizations and higher education institutions provided both outside professional expertise and facilities to assist magnet schools, according to several case studies (Eddy, 1981; Cunningham, 1976). However, the

reports on this type of community participation are generally individual case studies and may tend to focus on only those districts with "success stories" of organizational support and involvement. Thus, the effects of broad-based community institutional participation have not been systematically studied.

One important research question for those interested in the magnet school model is the degree and types of community participation that are stimulated through magnet schools. However, an equally important question is what district, school or community factors produce higher or lower levels of community participation. For example, factors such as actions by a school board or administrators in program design and planning the types of magnet themes, or the general community support for education may make a difference in the extent of participation in magnet programs. We would also like to know what factors are related to different types of participation by parents, higher education, private sector, and non-profit organizations.

The issue of the relation of community participation to public school educational effectiveness, which we outlined above as having two different perspectives, is a third major question of interest with magnet schools. Most studies of parent and organizational involvement in magnet schools have approached their involvement as an end in itself, i.e. they are assumed to have positive effects on students and the education process. The existing analysis of participation and education quality have generally been only single district case studies (e.g. Metz, 1981; Marshall, 1978; Schofield, 1977). In this study, the relationship between community participation and education quality

in magnet schools can be directly tested across a sample of districts. Thus, there are three research questions concerning community participation and magnet schools that are important for analyzing the effectiveness of this model for education innovation:

1. Do magnet schools increase community participation in public education, and if so, what kinds of participation are advanced?
2. What factors increase community participation in magnets, and can they be related to public schools in general?
3. Is there a relationship of community participation in magnet schools to their educational effectiveness?

The research is aimed at answering the questions of educators, researchers and parents who are interested in an assessment of the magnet school model and its implications for both improved school-community relations and education quality. But, we also want to use the research results on magnet schools to provide insight into the larger question of the role and impact of participation by parents and local organizations in public school descision-making, activities and operations.

An "Open-Systems" Approach to Analyzing Community Participation

The analysis of community participation in magnet schools and its educational effects in this study is based on a theoretical perspective grounded in the systems theory of organizations. Systems theory approaches the analysis of an organization's functions, objectives, internal operations, and outcomes by identifying the kinds and degree of interaction with interest groups and organizations in its environment (Hage and Aiken, (1970)). Herriott and Hodgkins (1973) applied this model to education systems and examined the enrollment that defines local public schools. Corwin (1974) has analyzed

schools and school systems using a systems approach, examining the local social, cultural and political factors that constrain and shape public education, as well as considering state and national interest groups and bureaucracies. He finds that a key role of the school board and administrators is to define the boundaries of the school system and the authority structure in order to maintain an appropriate extent of community involvement in education. But, in most school systems, community interest and pressures affect virtually all areas of decisions. For example, school curriculum decisions are strongly affected by political factors and the influence of various interest groups (Kirst and Walker, 1971). The research on public education that has applied an open systems theoretical approach has identified the role of many kinds of community participation and influence on what schools do and how they operate.

Using an open systems approach, it was hypothesized that parents and the community are likely to have significant impact on the design, implementation and success of the program. First, it was expected that the typical magnet program objectives of innovation in education quality and desegregation are likely to produce new forms of community involvement in schools. Second, it was expected that we would find that the program planning and development actions of school district policy-makers and administrators are critical in the breadth and degree of community participation and how it is utilized. And, third, we hypothesized that broad community participation in magnets results in higher expectations, better resources, and greater educational effectiveness.

METHOD AND VARIABLES

Data on magnet schools and community participation were collected through a comparative case study methodology involving national representative sample of urban school districts that operate magnet schools. In the spring of 1983, intensive site visits were conducted in 15 districts and 45 magnet schools by teams of senior researchers. Three data collection methods were used: a) interviews with board members, administrators, teachers, parents and community leaders; b) observation of educational processes in secondary magnet schools; and (c) requests for quantified data on student outcomes, staff characteristics and program enrollments.

The research was conducted as part of a two-year national study of magnet schools for the U.S. Department of Education, which began in the fall of 1981. The larger study had four major objectives: 1) to assess the effectiveness of magnet schools in improving education quality; 2) to measure the effect, if any, that magnet schools have on desegregation; 3) to analyze the degree of impact magnet school programs have on urban education problems; and 4) to identify school, district and community factors related to magnet school success. This paper is based on analysis of variables and data collected under the first and fourth study objectives.

The population of urban school districts with magnet school programs was established through a phone survey with the 275 largest school districts (over 20,000 enrollment) and 75 smaller urban districts that had applied for magnet school grants under the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), administered by the Department of Education from 1976 to 1981.

The sample of 15 urban districts was selected using four stratifying variables of: district size, geographic region, percent minority students in the district, and number of magnet schools. These strata were utilized to ensure representation across these key district variables and to ensure student minority representation between 20 and 80 percent of the total (i.e. where magnet schools could have significant desegregative impact). Also, districts selected had a minimum of three magnet schools and one secondary magnet. Within districts, the three schools were purposely selected to obtain sample representation across school magnet themes and socio-economic and racial/ethnic composition of school neighborhoods.

The variables that are employed in the analysis of community participation in magnet schools were coded following the completion of each district site visit, using data from the interviews, observations, and archive data. The variables are:

Type of community participation: active participation in the magnet school in four areas: a) program design and development, b) public relations or recruiting, c) part-time or volunteer instruction, d) demonstrated support through education materials and resources, facilities, or fund-raising.

Organization and community factors:

a) District policy consensus on magnet schools -- categorized as High or Low;

b) Community role in district-level program strategy and planning -- categorized as Wide or Narrow;

c) School leadership in program implementation -- district staff, principal, shared, or unclear;

d) Magnet school theme -- eight categories of curricular/instructional theme;

e) Type of school -- total magnet school or part-school program;

f) Predominant racial/ethnic and socio-economic group in school neighborhood.

Education quality of magnet school: Sum of school ratings on five observational scales (Activity rate, Interaction rate, Sentiment rate, Congruence between program and actual operations, and Realized Resources of facilities, staff and program).

FINDINGS

To analyze the first question of the extent of community participation, we first categorized the 45 magnet schools according to level of participation by the three main groups that participate in magnet schools -- parents, private sector (business/industry) and non-profit organizations (universities, colleges, cultural organizations and foundations). Each school was coded at a level of: high, above average for district, average, or low for each of the three groups (based on the accumulated interview responses and observations from the field team.) The matrix displayed in Table 1 shows the distribution of participation across the school sample. The "sum total" is used in subsequent analyses as the overall level of community participation in the magnet school.

The data on community participation by sector indicate that almost half of the magnets (21) have higher parent participation than other schools in the districts. Parent participation in an average urban secondary school is low. Since the study oversampled magnet secondary schools (41 of 45 schools), the results indicate that magnet schools have some success in raising level of parent involvement. However, the rate is not as high as some might anticipate. A frequent remark by staff and parent respondents across the study sample was that magnets sometimes have a more difficult time getting parent participation due to greater distance for travel to the school.

Additionally, it should be noted that parent satisfaction with magnet schools is consistently high across the schools and districts.

Regardless of how involved they are in the school, or whether the school is producing more for the student,
satisfaction to parents. This is very likely a product of the parent and student choice of the school (although this explanation was not tested).

Magnet schools have had considerable success at stimulating participation by the private sector and non-profit organizations. In general, public schools have had little involvement from local private or non-profit organizations in helping to plan or deliver education (the exception might be work-study programs or staff development seminars a few days a year). One of the purposes for developing magnet schools in some districts has been to increase linkages with local organizations interested in assisting education. We find that 38 percent of the magnet schools (17) have high or above average partipation by business or industry, often by the linkage between a theme and the industry, e.g. science/health and hospitals. Higher education institutions, cultural organizations and foundations play a part in 47 percent of the magnet schools in the study. These relations have served a wide variety of purposes as described below.

In total, the data indicate that 60 percent of the magnet schools (27 of 45) have high or above average participation from two of the three sectors. This proportion shows that not all magnet schools meet the highest expectations for stimulating school-community linkages,
but neither does it show that magnet schools are like other urban public schools. Magnet schools can and do draw higher levels of participation from the community than many other urban secondary schools, and a majority have attracted participation from organizations and institutions that

TABLE 1

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BY SECTOR

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION	SECTOR			
	Parents	Business/Indus.	Higher Ed./ Non-Profit	Sum[1]
High	8	10	10	10
Above Average for District	13	7	11	17
Average	18	28[2]	24[2]	17
Low	6	--	--	
TOTAL	45	45	45	45

[1]Two of three sectors at given/ level of participation.

[2]Note: The "average" participation of Business/Industry and Higher Education/Non-Profit organizations in the urban districts in the study is low or none. In subsequent tables, the average and low categories are merged.

typically have not had a role in public education. It should be noted that our measure of participation is conservative, since it was measured on the school level, and thus community participation in district-wide committees, advisory groups, advocacy, or other forms of district-level participation are underestimated. However, the school-level provides for analysis of the types of participation and the relation to education quality.

In Table 2, we can examine community participation in magnet schools further by analyzing the types of participation that have been indicative of the role of the three community sectors. Parent participation in the 21 magnets that had high or above average participation was usually in the areas of: a) assisting with decisions on program design and development, b) developing publicity for the school or helping recruit new students, or c) giving support to the school through identifying educational resources, organizing special events, raising funds for special purposes (e.g. carpeting or trips), or arranging for use of facilities. Thus, parents that are active in magnet schools have been involved in a broader range of activities than may be the norm for parent involvement, i.e. PTA meeting attendance or parent-teacher conferences. Thus, our categorization of high or above average parent participation indicated an increase as a difference of kind as well as degree.

Local businesses or industries that have been involved with magnet schools have most often taken a support role (15 of the 17 schools with greater participation). Often, this has been through providing regular learning experiences outside the classroom, sharing educational resources,

TABLE 2

TYPE OF PARTICIPATION BY COMMUNITY SECTOR

	TYPE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION			
HIGH/ABOVE AVERAGE PARTICIPATION BY:	Program Design/ Development	Public Relations/Recruit	Instruction	Support Role
Parents (21 schools)	16	14	3	14
Business/Industry (17)	5	6	7	15
Non-Profit (21)	10	8	20	18

or providing career internships. Some of the magnets benefitted through adopt-a-school programs. In a smaller number of schools, business representatives had a role in program planning (5), assisted in program marketing and recruiting campaigns (6), or loaned staff for helping with specialized instruction (7). In some of the districts, magnet schools have served as models for other schools in developing relationships with the private sector.

Non-profit organizations that are active in magnet schools have lent the greatest assistance with instruction (in 20 schools). Typically, we found that magnet schools with a theme specialization, such as science, social studies, or fine arts, developed a relationship with local college or university academic departments that provided part-time or volunteer instruction in a specialized area. Regular faculty, guest artists or lecturers, and resources of these institutions help to widen the learning opportunities for magnet students. Cultural organizations, such as art museums, historical associations, or opera companies also add to the instruction for some of the schools. Non-profit organizations also play an important part in support functions for magnet schools (18 schools) and in helping to design the program (10) or assist with publicity and recruitment (8). In general, we found that the degree to which magnet schools make use of the resources of local non-profit organizations is greater than other schools, and they are used for a wider range of purposes.

The data indicate that some magnet schools have much higher levels of community participation than others and that 60 percent of the magnets

have greater total participation than the average school in these districts. Our next question for analysis is what factors in the districts and schools are related to the extent of community participation.

Factors Related to Higher Community Participation

Among the six variables that were hypothesized as being likely to explain higher/lower community participation in magnets, three are strongly related (District Policy Consensus, Community Role in Planning, School Implementation Leadership), one is moderately related (Magnet Theme) and two variables are not related to level of participation (Type of Magnet, Neighborhood Composition).

The data in Table 3 show the distribution of level of community participation in the 45 schools by the extent of policy consensus among district leadership on the magnet school program. The level of policy consensus among the school board and top administrators giving direction and support to the magnet program was a major differentiating factor among the 15 sample districts. Eight of the districts had a high degree of policy consensus supporting the magnet program and its objectives, while seven were categorized as having a low degree of consensus. The degree of consensus behind the total district program apparently has important effects on the individual schools and the degree of community participation. In the eight districts with high consensus, nine magnet schools have high participation (sum of parent, private sector, and non-profit sector participation) and 10 have above average participation (for the district). In the seven districts with low consensus, 13 of the 21 schools have average or low participation.

TABLE 3

DISTRICT LEADERS PROGRAM POLICY
CONSENSUS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

	COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION			
DISTRICT POLICY CONSENSUS	High	Above Average	Average/Low	Total
High	9	10	5	24
Low	1	7	13	21
Total	10	17	18	45

Based on our understanding of the operation of magnet schools, it is likely this relationship is due to several factors: the positive publicity and support for magnet schools that is generated by district leadership as well as the efforts that are made by community leaders and district staff to make the program work. In districts that are committed to magnet schools as a programmatic and desegregative initiative, it is more likely that organizations as well as parents will take a more active role in helping the innovation to be effective.

Two elements of the process of implementation of district magnet program plans are strongly related to community participation in the schools: 1) the community and staff role in program planning and 2) leadership in implementation at the school level. Table 4 provides a matrix of community participation by the community and staff role in planning the district's magnet program and strategy for implementation. Among the eight districts in the study that had widely involved community representatives, district staff and teachers in planning, nine of the schools subsequently gained high community participation and 11 above average participation. These results reflect the impact of the interest and support for magnet schools that are developed through an open planning process.

Districts that actively sought input from neighborhood organizations, parent groups, business leaders and school staff on uses for the magnet concept, and how programs would be developed, tend to produce greater involvement in the schools once they are in operation. The finding confirms the well-known organization and program management lesson that participants need to feel they have a "stake" in a

TABLE 4

PROGRAM PLANNING AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

COMMUNITY/STAFF ROLE IN PLANNING	COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MAGNET SCHOOLS			
	High	Above Average	Average/Low	Total
Wide	9	11	4	24
Narrow	1	6	14	21
Total	10	17	18	45

program innovation or change for them to become active and enthusiastic. Conversely, among the districts that used a planning process that only involved narrow participation, such as a few parent leaders or community representatives (or where the program is totally planned by central district staff), there was generally average or low participation from the community (14 of 21 schools).

The second element of magnet program implementation that is related to community participation is the Leadership in Implementation at the school-level. For each magnet school in the study, we identified the key leader (if one existed) in the process of developing, organizing and implementing the magnet design in the school. This analysis corresponds to research on leadership of effective schools as well as studies of program innovation. The data in Table 5 clearly show that the magnet schools that benefitted from the strong leadership of a principal or central district staff tend to have higher levels of community participation. Twelve of the 13 schools with a strong principal model have high or above average participation, while 11 of the 18 schools with leadership by district staff, generally a magnet schools director, gained outstanding participation.

The findings demonstrate that an important function provided by strong leaders of magnet schools is outreach to the community. In most of the schools in the study that have a high level of participation, particularly from business and non-profit organizations, a major reason is the ideas, initiative, and energy of the principal or magnet staff, who recognized the potential benefits from these linkages. Leadership also has a key role in parent participation by stimulating new

TABLE 5

MAGNET SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

MAGNET IMPLEMENTATION LEADERSHIP	COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION			
	High	Above Average	Average/Low	Total
Principal	3	9	1	13
District Staff	5	6	7	18
Shared	2	1	3	6
Unclear	0	1	7	8
Total	10	17	18	4

opportunities for involvement and creating an environment in which parents feel they can have an important role. In addition, the leader can be pivotal in broadening participation to parent and community groups and setting up systems that can balance off the various expressed interests of these groups, e.g. a program advisory committee or committees for various functions related to the school that in turn gain new participants.

In the six magnet schools that had shared leadership (e.g. district staff, principal and/or teachers), only three gained high or above average participation. These schools are likely to have had good program leadership but the sense of ownership and responsibility for the program succeeding was not present, and this may have led to less vigorous efforts to involve the community and parents. It is also possible that planning and development of the magnet school design is not done with as much detail or creativity when leadership is shared across several persons at different positions in the system.

The importance of leadership during implementation is evidenced by the low levels of participation in schools that had unclear leadership (7 of 8 schools). These were schools that apparently operated as magnet schools very similarly as they had previously as regular schools. We could not discern any clear leadership or initiative in the design and development of the magnet school. Consequently, these schools maintained levels of community participation very similar to regular secondary schools in their district.

A fourth variable that we anticipated to be related to the level of community participation is the magnet school theme. One expected reason was that the attractiveness of certain school themes would bring greater parent and organizational involvement in the school, based on the idea of demand creating higher interest. For example, magnets that attracted more middle class students through a college preparatory theme would be likely to have higher participation.

However, the distribution of magnet theme by level of community participation, in Table 6, indicates that the schools gaining higher levels of participation are those with a specific subject area theme, i.e. arts and science. Nine of the 11 arts-theme magnets and four of five science magnets have high or above average participation. No other theme has over 50 percent of the schools with above average participation.

It is interesting to note that among the schools with a general college preparatory theme, there is no trend toward higher levels of participation than other themes (half have high or above average participation). Additionally, magnets with a combination of themes, e.g. arts and academic, have more schools with average participation. These results indicate that participation in magnet schools is raised by a single theme identity which draws the interest of parents and private and non-profit organizations. Apparently, the more general themes do not distinguish a magnet school as being unique within the community.

Community Participation and Education Quality

The third question in our analysis, and the one of most direct import for assessing the effects of community participation on public

TABLE 6

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BY MAGNET SCHOOL THEME

	COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION			
THEME	High	Above Average	Average/Low	Total
Arts	5	4	2	11
Science	1	3	1	5
Social Studies	1		1	2
Occupation/Careers		2	2	4
College Prep/Acad.	2	2	4	8
Alternative		1	2	3
Traditional	1	2	2	5
Combination		3	4	7
TOTALS	10	17	18	45

schools, is the relationship of participation to the educational effectiveness of magnet schools.

The magnet schools study upon which this research is based employed a multiple-indicator, composite measure of the educational quality within the magnet schools. This measure is the sum of ratings on 20 indicators of the school curriculum, instruction, interaction, learning opportunities, and attainment of objectives.* The measure was used to analyze and explain the extent of education quality found in the magnet schools on the study. Although this measure is correlated with student achievement test scores, we found that it provides a more valid, comprehensive measure of the extent to which the magnet school innovation improves the quality of education for all students in a school. Also, it was not correlated with the degree of selectivity for entering students.

In Table 7, the education quality measure is crosstabulated with the level of community participation in the magnet schools. At this basic level of associative analysis, there are no controls for other possibly related variables that may affect both community participation and education quality. Several of these variables would be: a) special attention from the district-level; b) coherence of the magnet design and the methods of program delivery, e.g., staff, resources, or facilities; and c) the role of the magnet school in desegregation.

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*Note: The education quality rating measure has a possible score of 100. See Appendix I for the list of quality indicators.

TABLE 7

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BY
MAGNET EDUCATION QUALITY

District Community Participation	Average Rating of Education Quality in Magnets				
	80 to 100	70-80	60-70	0-60	Total
High	2	5	2	0	9
Average	0	0	2	0	2
Low	0	0	1	3	4
TOTAL	2	5	5	3	15

However, keeping in mind that we are not testing a cause and effect relationship, we can examine the degree of relation between community participation and education quality to determine the basic extent to which community participation is a contributing factor to quality education in magnet schools. The data indicate that districts which have a high degree of overall community involvement (parents, private sector, and non-profit sector) tend to have higher ratings on education quality. Seven of the nine districts with high community involvement in magnet schools have education quality ratings at 72 or higher. The four districts with low community involvement have the four lowest quality ratings, varying from 42 to 61.

As we have indicated, the association of these variables does not necessarily mean there is a causal relationship. But, we can say that the community role is an important factor, among others, in the quality of education in magnet schools.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of community participation in magnet schools presented in this paper informs several aspects of the issue of community participation in urban public schools and the usefulness of external relations for school systems. First, our research shows that magnet schools' community participation is positively related to quality education. The contributions of parents and community organizations to the design, implementation and operation of the magnet school is part of the developmental process of an effective magnet school. We do not find any evidence that the input and influence of community groups and organizations detract from, or dilute, the school's efforts towards quality education.

The extent of attention devoted to the core curriculum has been a major question concerning magnet schools. Our research has found that magnets with higher levels of community participation and quality education generally have good basic curriculum and instruction, not just a specialized or advanced program. Thus, the development of magnet schools has not typically been an innovation that adds "another program" to an already diverse and heterogenous secondary curriculum, but rather it is a method of structuring and organizing the curriculum to focus on improving overall academic excellence.

A second major finding is that broad participation from the community is related to magnet school quality. Participation from a narrow set of parent interest groups of community leaders is not associated with quality education programs, but rather, quality programs have wide participation from different parent groups, businesses, higher education

institutions and other non-profit organizations that have an interest in public education. Quality is not advanced by the development of a magnet school to meet the interests of a specific group because that type of school often only raises resentment and suspicion among administrators, teachers and parents, and eventually the program quality suffers.

The research results have shown that variation in community participation in magnet schools varies according to actions and decisions at the district and school level. Higher levels of community participation are found with magnet schools that have benefitted from a district leadership policy consensus that provides a strong sense of commitment and support for the magnet school innovation. The public effect of this policy consensus is to build community interest in magnet schools and increase positive responses to requests for assistance. Second, communities take a more active part in magnet programs when there is energetic, innovative leadership at the school level during program implementation. Parents and community organizations take a more active interest in a specific school and its program when there is a clear signal from a principal or district program director of the genuine desire for their assistance. Third, we found that participation is advanced by involving community and staff representatives in the early stages of program planning at the district level. By this step, the "good word" on the program is spread earlier, the process of implementation has more points of community participation built into it, and a wider range of participants feel they have a stake in the program.

Finally, the most basic finding of our research is that a high level of parent and community participation is not an automatic

by-product of a magnet school program. The fact that 60 percent of the magnet schools in the study had a level of participation above the average for secondary schools in their district indicates that high participation is realizable, but not an easy product of this model. We believe these results demonstrate that broad-based participation in a magnet school, or any public school, is the result of a planned and sustained outreach effort for community involvement.

The research shows that magnet schools tend to gain higher interest and satisfaction from parents due to their uniqueness and voluntary choice aspects, but those schools that have gained a higher degree of participation have had an approach and program design that included involving community groups and individuals. The implication of this finding for urban public schools, in general, is that the community needs to recognize a specific purpose for its participation and have their involvement stimulated by the efforts of school staff. In other words, the community role is greater when it is incorporated into the regular process of planning and operating a public school or public education program.

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APPENDIX I

Rating Scale for Magnet School
Education Quality

School Name

Grades Served

Type of Magnet: Part _____

Whole _____

SITE: _____

DATE: _____

DATA SOURCE: _____

TEAM MEMBER: _____

CHART 19

Education Treatment Quality

Rate from 1 (Low) to 10 (High):

A. Activity Rate: observational rating of task-based behavior ongoing among both students and staff, both curricular and extracurricular

_____ 1. Proportion of students taking more than minimal course load (in # of items or difficulty level vs. district)

_____ 2. Proportion active in extracurricular activities

_____ 3. Number of current announcements of events on bulletin boards

_____ 4. Proportion of faculty stays on campus beyond formal end of classes

_____ 5. Level of educational activity observed in classes in session

B. Interaction Rate: observational rating of student-student, staff-student, and staff-staff and non-staff-student proportion of opportunities taken to interact

_____ 1. Student-student sociability on campus, out of classroom

_____ 2. Quality of staff-student interaction on campus, in classrooms, P's office, guidance office, cafeteria, gym (education-related vs. other)

_____ 3. Frequency of staff-staff dialogue on program matters

_____ 4. Admin-teachers' frequency of oral interaction

_____ 5. Frequency of parents, other volunteers on campus to share help in program (according to staff and parents)

C. Sentiment Rate: observational rating of opportunities taken to contribute to helping other members of school community

_____ 1. Availability and appropriateness of academic services, formal and informal, from tutorial to remedial to counseling

_____ 2. Student access to equipment (e.g., drama, music, computers, science, language lab) when desired/interested

_____ 3. Affection expressed for school community

_____ 4. Provision of recognition, appreciation of student growth or level of effort

CHART 19

(continued)

Education Treatment Quality

D. Congruence of Tasks with Mission: observational rating of the consistency between stated program goals and the actual program operations

_____ 1. Opportunities to try out, perform roles learned (e.g., learning through doing)

_____ 2. Staff statements about their sense of congruence of goals and means

_____ 3. Intramural competition based on the theme

_____ 4. Same as 3, but extramural

_____ 5. Reputation of program based on study activities and learning which are consistent with theme and goals

E. Extent of Realized Resources: observational rating of degree to which both material and symbolic features of campus and program are fully utilized

_____ 1. Level of ingenuity in multiple usages for space

_____ 2. Staff advocacy for allocation of needed resources from district and outside district

_____ 3. Cross-group, cross-grade opportunities in schedule design for student self-actualization, tryout and advanced learning

_____ 4. Support for student and staff initiatives to vary routines, try new learnings